

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LILONG 00765 240941Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 VO-05 CIAE-00 FBIE-00 INSE-00
NSAE-00 CA-01 HA-05 MMO-01 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00
INRE-00 /023 W

-----098068 240951Z /17

O R 240850Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1907

INFO DIA WASHDC//AH-8//

DA WASHDC//DAMI-ISI

C O N F I D E N T I A L LILONGWE 0765

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, MILI, MI

SUBJECT: MALAWI DESERTER CASE--FIRST SHOE DROPS

REF: (A) STATE 128253 (B) STATE 95396

1. ON MAY 23 THE COMMANDER OF THE MALAWI ARMY, GENERAL G. C. MATEWERE, SUMMONED U.S. DEFENSE ATTACHE TO ARMY HEADQUARTERS TO DISCUSS THE ISSUANCE OF AN AMERICAN IMMIGRANT VISA TO A MAN WANTED FOR DESERTION BY THE MALAWIAN AUTHORITIES. MATEWERE INDICATED THAT HE WAS SHOCKED AND SURPRISED AS WELL AS DISAPPOINTED AND "VERY, VERY EMBARRASSED." THE GENERAL APPEARED LITTLE INTERESTED IN THE EXPLANATION THAT DESERTION IS NOT CONSIDERED A CRIME INVOLVING MORAL TURPITUDE. IN HIS EYES THE USG IS SEEN TO HAVE AIDED AND ABETTED A FUGITIVE FROM MALAWIAN JUSTICE. THE ARMY COMMANDER ALSO NOTED THAT HE WAS NOW UNCERTAIN IF HE COULD FAVORABLY RECOMMEND THAT THE PROPOSED U.S. ARMY FOREIGN AREA OFFICER TRAINEE BE ASSIGNED TO MALAWI (REFTEL B).

2. MATEWERE STATED THAT IT WOULD BE HIS UNPLEASANT TASK TO INFORM LIFE PRESIDENT BANDA OF THE OUTCOME OF
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THIS CASE. GOM REACTION WILL DEPEND UPON BANDA'S PERCEPTION OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE MATTER. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT MATEWERE'S IRE COULD BE MODIFIED BY BANDA'S REACTION (I.E. IF THE LIFE PRESIDENT IS UNCONCERNED, MATEWERE'S UNHAPPINESS COULD DIMINISH).

3. COMMENT: THE ARMY'S NON-ATTENDANCE AT A U.S.

ARMED FORCES DAY CELEBRATION ON MAY 20 IS ANOTHER APPARENT REPERCUSSION FROM THIS INCIDENT. FOLLOWING THE LIFE PRESIDENT'T PRIVATE VISIT TO THE U.S., HOWEVER, MUCH LOCAL MEDIA ATTENTION HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE EXISTING STRONG AND FRIENDLY U.S.-MALAWI RELATIONS. WHETHER THE DESERTER AFFAIR WILL AFFECT THIS WILL DEPEND UPON BANDA'S REACTION TO GENERAL MATEWERE'S NEWS.
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